



# Regional Transportation Mandate

Implementation Guide

## **Regional Transportation Mandate Implementation Guide**

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E3B 5H1  
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# Executive Summary

The Province of New Brunswick has undertaken a major local governance reform and among the changes adopted is expanded mandates for Regional Service Commissions (RSCs) in key areas including the development and implementation of strategies that will provide regional transportation services to better serve residents.

There are several forms of transportation currently relied upon by New Brunswickers to meet their daily needs. The planning that is to be undertaken by the RSCs will consider all forms, with particular attention to passenger transportation which includes: urban public transit, regional public transit, community transit and intercity transit.

The primary objective of the planning exercise is to design and implement strategies that will lead to the creation of integrated regional transportation systems with mobility options that are available, affordable, and accessible for residents and ultimately can become highly integrated on a provincial scale. This represents a significant undertaking, one which requires a whole of government approach to achieve success.

To help guide the planning process, this implementation guide sets out a framework for specific roles and responsibilities that must be carried out. The details are presented in a conceptual framework that consists of four distinct levels. These levels, along with the specific areas of responsibility are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: Levels of Responsibility in Regional Transportation**

<b>Provincial</b>	<b>Regional</b>	<b>Operation Management</b>	<b>Day-to-day Operations</b>
Legislative/ regulatory	Regional planning	Regional administration	Delivery of service
Financial assistance	Financial management	Technology support	
Technology support	Program/service delivery oversight	Asset management:	
Strategic coordination and stakeholder relations	Public relations		

## Section 1: Background Information

The need for public transportation services is increasing due to a multitude of factors. An ageing population that is less inclined, or capable to drive, increasing rates of disability, and the mounting pressures posed by growing communities on one hand and the low density of rural areas on the other creates the need for a strategy with viable travel options to support the efficient movement of people.

Enhanced transportation options will make it easier for people, especially vulnerable populations to access services, healthcare, education, and cultural activities. Efforts to strengthen planning aimed at better linking New Brunswick communities on a provincial scale will make it easier to match the labour supply with demand, which will support potential business investments and improve financial outcomes for the province.

As part of the local governance reform initiative undertaken by the Province of New Brunswick an expanded mandate has been established for regional service commissions (RSCs) including areas relating to community development, economic development, and regional transportation. This change represents a significant endeavour for RSCs and recognizes that RSCs will now provide regional leadership in each of these areas.

It is also the case that environmental concerns regarding GHG emissions are another factor. New Brunswick has adopted a new Climate Change Action Plan for 2022-2027 [climate-change-action-plan.pdf \(gnb.ca\)](#), which includes an action (#6) which recommends that:

“regional service commissions receive support in developing and implementing regional transportation plans for each region by 2023 to increase accessibility, affordability, and availability of community and public transportation services and work towards integrating regional transportation services”.

To ensure that regional transportation planning is aligned to meet the objectives of the new RSC mandates, as well as key desired outcome of the Climate Change Action Plan, this implementation guide has been prepared to guide RSCs with the development and implementation of strategies that will provide regional transportation services to better serve residents.

## 1.1 What is Regional Transportation?

There are several modes of transportation relied upon by New Brunswickers, including personal car, cycling, walking, reliance upon others through affinity networks, or public services and infrastructure, such as public transit, intercity transportation, and various forms of subsidized community transportation. Table 2 provides a concise summary of the four types of passenger transportation in New Brunswick.

**Table 2. Types of Passenger Transport Service in New Brunswick**

	<b>Management</b>	<b>Type of Travel</b>	<b>Density of Area Served</b>	<b>Vehicle Size</b>	<b>Route Type</b>	<b>Frequency of Service</b>
<b>Urban Public Transit</b>	Mid-Size to Large Cities	Short to Medium Distances	Medium to High	Mid to Large	Fixed Route, No Reservation	High
<b>Regional Public Transit</b>	RSCs	Short to Medium Distances	Low to Medium	Small to Mid-Size	Variable	Medium
<b>Community Transit</b>	RSCs and Non-profit	Short to Long Distances	Variable	Small	Customized Route	On Demand
<b>Intercity Transit</b>	Private Sector	Long Distances	Variable	Very Large	Fixed Route, With or Without Reservation	Low

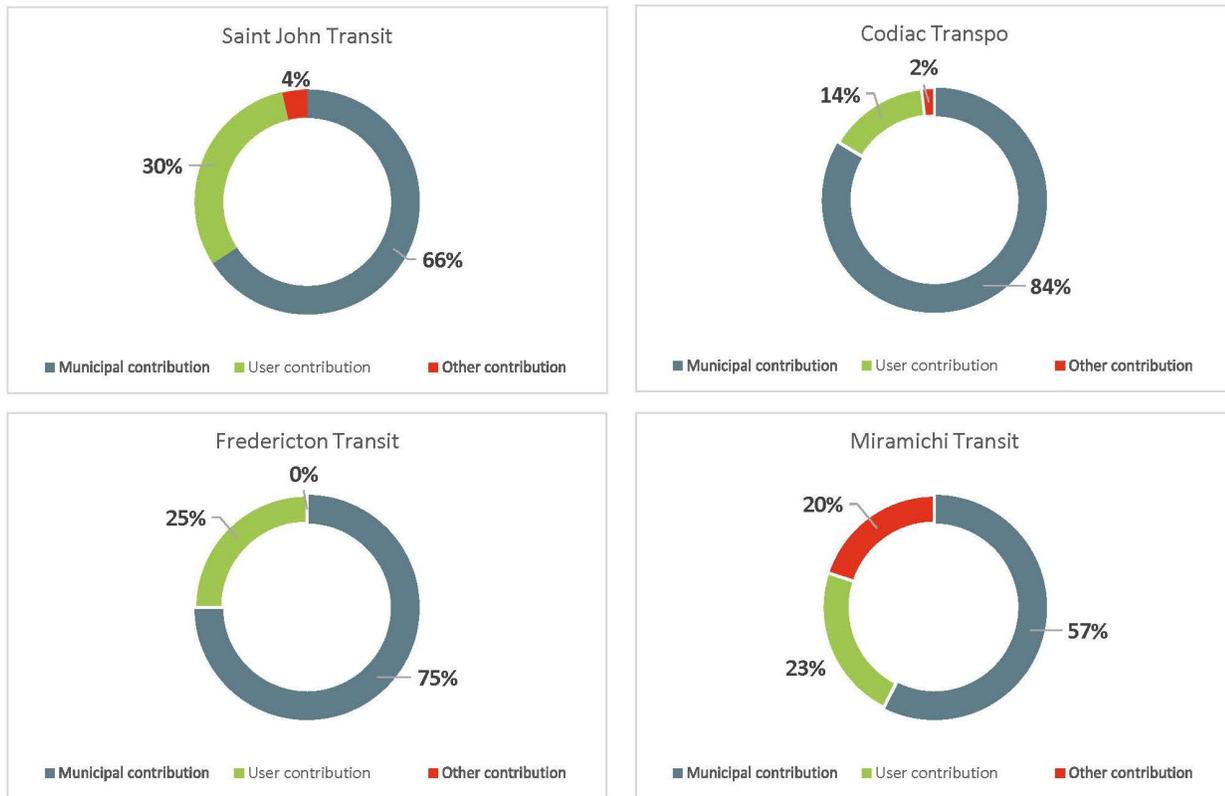
For purposes of this implementation guide, **Urban Public Transit service** refers to urban passenger transit systems, such as those that are currently operated in four major urban centres in New Brunswick, including Saint John Transit, Codiac Transpo in Moncton, Fredericton Transit and Miramichi Transit.

**Table 3. Financial and Ridership Data for Urban Transit Services**

	Saint John Transit	Codiac Transpo	Fredericton Transit	Miramichi Transit
<b>Estimated Ridership (2019)</b>	2.0 M	2.5 M	2.1 M	8,000
<b>Estimated Ridership (2021)</b>	1.2 M	1.0 M	950,000	7,800
<b>Annual Budget (2021)</b>	\$8.2 M	\$11 M	\$5.5 M	\$470,000
<b>Annual Budget Per Capita (2021)</b>	\$77	\$86	\$87	\$26
<b>Annual Budget Per Trip (2021)</b>	\$7	\$11	\$6	\$60

Costs are a major influence on final decisions as public transportation services cannot function without some level of subsidization. Figure 1 shows the relative contributions of various funders to the annual budgets of each urban transit operating authority. Municipal funding accounts for the majority while user contributions are in the range of 14% to 30%.

**Figure 1: Funding Contributions to Urban Transit Services**



**Regional Public Transit** provides scheduled routes between communities over short to medium distances, this is an important option to be considered as RSCs develop their plans to include transportation services on a regional scale. To date, only the Acadian Peninsula RSC has moved in this direction and is currently operating a **regional public transit** service as a pilot over a 34-week period. This pilot was launched in November 2022 and consists of a bus that includes five round trips per day between Caraquet and Shippagan.

**Community Transit** services are typically targeted to seniors, residents who are often living with modest income, and/or residents who lack mobility options and as a result struggle to meet the needs of their daily lives, access various services, businesses or health care facilities or take part in community activities events.

Typically, community transit services are based on the following three pillars: a volunteer driver and vehicle, who provides the service and is reimbursed for costs incurred; a user wishing to travel to access a public service, business or health care facility or take part in a community activity or event; and a dispatching service to connect users with drivers who are available to render the transportation service.

Several regions of New Brunswick have taken advantage of the funding that is made available by the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC) through the Community Inclusion Network (CIN) to establish the dial-a-ride approach to delivering this service.

**Intercity Transit** refers to fixed routes over long distances connecting multiple municipalities and provinces. The Maritime Provinces benefit from a relatively extensive intercity transit network that is privately operated, currently by the company Maritime Bus. This form of transportation will be a key consideration as RSCs seek to achieve greater integration of their respective approaches.

## Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities

### 2.1 Framework Components:

To establish this framework a review of the public transportation services provided in other jurisdictions across Canada was undertaken. Input was also solicited from transportation authorities within the Province of New Brunswick through a focused consultations process. The findings of these efforts may be summarized broadly as follows:

- 1) planning must be undertaken according to specific and measurable objectives or guiding principles; and
- 2) the success or achievement of objectives relies on the provision of specific authorities, processes, and tools, which are organized in this framework according to areas of responsibility on four distinct levels; Provincial level, Regional Service Commission level, Operational/Management level, and Service Provider.

### 2.2 Guiding Principles

Previous studies conducted on the subject of regional transportation, including the report “From Surfaces to Services” ([FromSurfacesToServices.pdf \(gnb.ca\)](#)) prepared for the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation recommend that regional transportation planning be guided by specific principles. For purposes of this document, the following six principles have been adopted to establish a clear set of expectations that all plans are to meet.

- Promote integrated transport and land use planning
- Foster social inclusion to overcome isolation and promote active living
- Improve economic inclusion and quality of life

- Increase affordability for individuals and families
- Make the transport system more environmentally sustainable
- Make the transportation system accessible for people with disabilities

## 2.3 Provincial Responsibilities (Level 1)

The ability of RSCs to develop and implement plans to support their new mandates for regional transportation will require legal and administrative jurisdictions of the province be aligned, including legislative/regulatory, policies, financial assistance, and stakeholder consultation.

### 1. Legislative/ regulatory:

GNB will create the legislative environment that support the regional transportation mandate of the RSCs and align its legislation, regulations, and policies to support regional transportation initiatives by RSCs.

The responsibilities of the RSCs are set out in the *Regional Service Delivery Act*. In addition to the development and implementation of a regional strategy to establish priority services and actions with respect to expanded mandates, including regional transportation, the Act specifies that RSCs shall provide or facilitate the provision of a regional transportation service.

### 2. Financial assistance:

Public transit services are heavily dependent upon funding outside of user fees to sustain operations (ranging from approximately 84% of total operating costs in Moncton to 57% in Miramichi).

While the provincial government does not provide direct funding for public transit, GNB recognizes that public transportation must receive financial support and therefore the following funding continues to be available:

- GNB will continue to provide funding through the new Regional Services Support Fund to support areas of regional priority including the development of regional transportation services.
- GNB, through the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (ESIC), will continue to provide base funding of \$50K from for community transportation initiatives (with potential to increase).

- GNB, through WorkingNB as part of the Canada-New Brunswick Labour Market Agreements will provide funding to support economic development, labour force development and newcomer retention services.
- GNB, through RDC funding programs will continue to support investments in capital assets and infrastructure, with the ability to leverage eligible federal funding.
- GNB, through RDC funding programs will provide funding to support investments in non-capital related initiatives such as planning, promotions, active transportation, etc.

### **3. Technology support**

Technology solutions are increasingly used by transit service managers because they help optimize services and make them more seamless for users. A shared technology solution for all RSCs is recommended for several reasons:

- It would achieve much better economies of scale than developing separate solutions for each RSC
- It would allow for better integration of services across regions and encourage interregional use
- It would make it easier to incorporate many services into a single RSC
- It would help harmonize rates/fares
- It would help collect standardized data across the province and improve accountability processes

GNB will work with RSCs to secure a technology solution to meet the province's distinct needs and manage public and community transit in a modern, efficient, and integrated way.

### **4. Strategic Coordination and Stakeholder Relations:**

The transportation sector is influenced in some form by 12 provincial departments and agencies. Strategies at the regional level cannot succeed without strong coordinating support to maintain policy alignment within GNB as well as among external stakeholders.

Given its expertise in helping provide community transit services, combined with its direct involvement with local communities and efforts to address social issues, the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation is well suited to assume a leadership role.

To ensure that regional transportation planning receives a whole of government focus, GNB commits to do the following:

- a) GNB, through the combined leadership of ELG and ESIC, will establish a forum to promote collaboration and consultation among stakeholders to advance the objectives of an integrated regional transportation services at the provincial level.
- b) GNB will continue to review and evolve this framework consisting of defined program outcomes and performance measures to monitor progress.

## 2.4 Regional Service Commission Responsibilities (Level 2)

The RSCs, in collaboration with their member local governments and rural districts will develop regional transportation plans that set out immediate priorities and long-term strategies that help achieve the delivery of a transportation system with mobility options that are available, affordable, and accessible for residents and ultimately can become highly integrated on a provincial scale. Ensuring success for public transit and community transportation will require first and foremost that services are effectively organized and where possible regionally integrated, based on one of the following three options.

1. **Internal model:** The RSC will deliver regional transportation services directly through its organizational structure. In practice this means having a regional transportation department at the RSC, or an individual within the RSC responsible for transportation. The department or person will report to the RSC's chief executive officer.
2. **External model:** the RSC will finance a third party to deliver regional transportation services on its behalf. This could include partnering with a local government or a non-governmental agency, most notably not-for-profit organizations. The partner or local government must have a memorandum of understanding with the RSC and regularly report to the RSC board of directors.
3. **Combined model:** The combination model will allow the RSC to choose a combination of internal and external delivery models or have elements of the service delivered by more than one third party organization. Key to properly implementing this model will be a clearly defined relationship between the RSC and the other organizations.

The decision as to the preferred model will depend on the capacity of each region and the level of service to be provided. It is important to note that the level of service will vary from region to region. Planning by RSCs will need to consider what is the best viable option available that meets baseline needs within the full spectrum of the RSC's mandate and priorities. As a result, there will be custom solutions with no one-size fits all approach.

The specific actions to be undertaken by the RSCs are as follows:

### **1. Regional planning:**

- a) RSCs will develop a regional transportation service that aligns with provincial government policy frameworks such as the Climate Change Action Plan, regional economic development/growth, land use planning, transportation planning and fiscal responsibility.
- b) RSCs, in collaboration with their member local governments and rural district will develop regional transportation plans that identify immediate priorities and long-term strategies to guide planning and development of a regional multi-modal transportation system that meets the demands of future growth in population, business and economic development, and is focused on sustainability. It is recommended that these plans be based on a three-year timeline and updated annually. An outline of the specific details that will be required of these plans is attached as **Appendix "A"**.
- c) As part of this process, RSCs will consider current service levels, areas of best practice, areas for improvement and potential solutions for achieving a balanced and sustainable integrated transportation system within each region.
- d) RSCs will collaborate with all government stakeholders to establish key actions with outcome measures that can be reported on annually.
- e) RSCs will outline the strategies and tools required (such as technology, software, physical assets) to implement recommended actions including the model of service delivery, the roles of local governments and rural districts, any key partnerships, assessment of timing, as well as broad cost implications, funding needs and next steps.

### **2. Financial management:**

- a) RSCs will be responsible to develop annual financial plans that support their regional transportation strategies. Recognizing that public transportation is not financially self-sustaining, the RSCs will need to determine their level of investment and will be eligible to receive provincial funding support (noted above) to off-set costs.

### **3. Program/service delivery oversight:**

- a) RSCs will determine the level of administration required to support the tasks/functions required to execute the transportation plan. Depending on the service delivery model selected, these tasks may include direct involvement in the coordination of day to-day

operations, monitoring performance, fulfilling reporting requirements and liaison with provincial authorities (regulatory, funding, etc.).

- b) RSCs will establish a forum to promote collaboration and consultation at the regional level among local stakeholders, citizens, and First Nations to monitor community needs, solicit input and promote the objectives of regional transportation services.

#### 4. Public relations:

- a) RSCs will dedicate the resources to ensuring that the public is kept informed, complaints are addressed, and promotional activities and campaigns are undertaken.

## 2.5 Operations Management (Level 3)

The delivery of a regional transportation service will require that the operator has the proper tools to perform the day-to-day operations. These details will be identified as part of the planning process and will primarily involve the following key elements:

1. **Regional administration:** the necessary arrangements are formalized and maintained to carry out the day-to-day operations, which may include contract negotiation and management in the case of third-party contractors/volunteers, or daily resource/asset management in the case of in-house service delivery.
2. **Technology support:** the necessary software is in place to provide tools that streamline critical functions and financial transactions within an integrated IT solution (scheduling, dispatching, collecting fares, etc.)
3. **Asset management:** the tangible assets required to convey residents and provide service are procured and maintained.

## 2.6 Service delivery (Level 4)

This level represents the foundation of the framework and is where the day-to-day operations occur. At this stage, the necessary planning is completed, and all the regulatory and operational requirements have been finalized, including the acquisition of necessary permits, the procurement of assets (both tangible and digital), the recruitment of personnel (employees/volunteers and contractors), and marketing and outreach initiatives are in place to promote the service to residents.

## Appendix A: Regional Transportation Plan Format

### **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN FORMAT**

The regional transportation plan will contain the following:

- A profile of public transit and community transportation needs (in conjunction with the work of the regional roundtable)
- A description of other existing passenger transport services (intercity transport, taxi, etc.)
- Key passenger transport issues and challenges
- Goals of the proposed service offering
- Existing and proposed services
  - Community transit services:
    - Eligible clients and reasons
    - Service area
    - Fares and how to make a reservation
  - Public transit services (urban and regional)
    - Schedules, routes and stops
    - Fares and how to make a reservation
- Current and projected ridership
- Financial statement for the service (previous year)
- Budget estimate for current year
- Fiscal forecasts for another two years
- Plan for meeting capital and vehicle requirements